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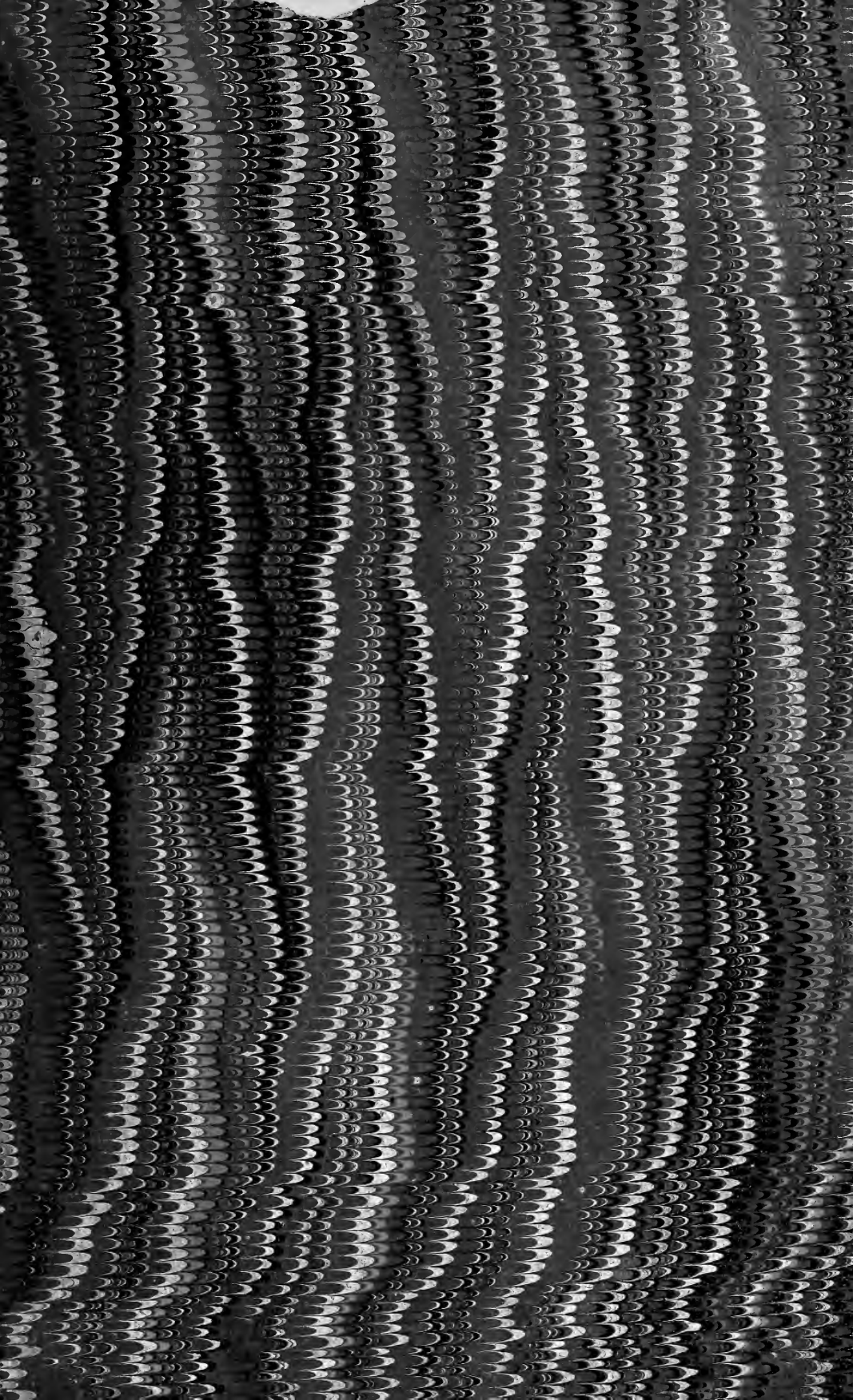
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The Appeal of Romanism to Educated Protestants.

A PAPER

READ BEFORE THE

EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE,

NEW YORK, *October 8, 1873.*

BY

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OF BROOKLYN, N. Y.



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THE APPEAL OF ROMANISM TO EDUCATED PROTESTANTS.

BY THE REV. R. S. STORRS, D.D., BROOKLYN, N. Y.

It is always easy, though always unsafe, to underestimate the attractive force of a system of belief adverse to our own. Standing on the outside of it, we see only its external proportions. The inner chambers, filled with whatever precious and pleasant riches, are hidden from us; and one must be of a remarkably sympathetic and comprehensive mind to be able to enter into them, and to see the whole structure as its inhabitants do.

It is especially difficult for us as Protestants to understand the attractive power of Romanism. Jealousy of it, as of a stealthy and dangerous system, careless of virtue, eager for power, exquisitely adjusted to win mankind by condoning their vices and consecrating their pride—this is an inheritance to which we are born. And such hereditary impressions ripen with most of us into personal conviction. Not only does it seem to us hostile to liberty, and to rational progress, incompatible with a liberal and fruitful civilization; it seems so distinctly to antagonize the Gospel, so positively to contradict the fundamental ideas of the Divine Government—dissociating religion from morality, and destiny from character—its description and its doom seem so luridly and indelibly written in history, that we can not, without a distinct and strenuous effort, understand how any should accept it.

We have, therefore, been wont to regard the Roman Church as the Church of the ignorant and the superstitious alone; to expect that those born and trained within it will come out from it, with intelligent protest or with passionate revolt, when they shall have reached a higher level of education and moral force; and it has seemed well-nigh incredible that any one educated under Protestant influences should be allured into its fold.

When such a one has gone to its communion, we have been apt to feel that he must have been moved either by a desire for political preferment, and the aid of the priesthood in his personal schemes; or by the wish for terms of salvation which would leave his lusts free, and yet quiet his fears; or by regard for particular teachers, as Newman or Faber in England, Brownson, Hecker, or Hewit, in this country; or that he was attracted by the tone of authority, and the

splendid pomp of the outward spectacle; or that he was moved by a general uncertain eccentricity of mind, which might have made him a Shaker or a Mormon, but which, by chance, did make him a Papist; or, finally, that it has been with him a blind leap after belief, in a desperate reaction from the lonely gloom of infidelity.

In one or other of these ways we almost always account for the transfer to Romanism of one who has been educated outside its influences; while at last we are often constrained to leave it, as a strange phenomenon, not wholly explained by any thing which the man himself has said, or any thing which our thoughts can suggest.

For some have gone who have certainly not been thus impelled; of whose change no one of the motives which I have mentioned gives any more account than it does of the origin of the *Paradise Lost*. They are serious, devout, conscientious persons, intent on learning, and then on doing, the will of the Almighty; of no peculiar turn of mind, with no marked predominance of imagination or emotional sensibility; many of them educated in the best and most liberal Protestant schools; some of them among the noblest of their time, whom it is a serious loss to us to lose.

And it is to be distinctly observed that these men accept the system of Romanism with no languor or reserve, with no esoteric and half-Protestant interpretation of it, with no thought at all of modifying its dogmas for their personal use by the exercise of a private judgment upon them. They take the system as it stands. They take it altogether. They look with pity, not unmixed with contempt, on those who are eager to adopt its phraseology and to mimic its ceremonies, while declining to submit their minds to its mandates; and for themselves they confess doctrines which seem to us incredible, and conform themselves to practices which look to us like idolatrous mummary, with gladness and pride.

Now, what moves these men? What is the attraction which the system presents to such as these, in Germany, England, this country?—an attraction which is strong enough to wholly detach them from their early associations, and to make them devotees of a spiritual power which from child-

hood they were taught to dread and to detest?

It is this question to which I am asked to give a partial and rapid answer. Of course it must be an imperfect answer, since I am not a Romanist, in any sense or any measure. On the other hand, I am a Congregationalist, in the broadest significance; believing for myself, without the wish to impose the belief on any body else, that each society of believers, permanently associated for the worship of God, and for the celebration of Christian ordinances, is a proper and complete church; competent to elect and ordain its officers, to administer the sacraments, and to fashion its rules and its ritual, under Christ, while bound to maintain and teach his truth, to honor the law of Christian purity, and to live in unity of spirit, and in fellowship of good works, with all similar societies. So far, therefore, as the Roman organization is concerned, I stand at almost the furthest remove from it; with nobody beyond me, so far as I know, unless it be the Society of Friends.

And concerning the whole immense system which that organization represents and subserves, I confess my sympathy with the most radical of the Reformers. I believe that the Fathers were thoroughly right in revolting against Rome; that we are under the highest obligations to maintain that revolt; and that Christian civilization would perish from the earth, if the Papal supremacy should become universal.

So it can not be that I should understand the system, or feel its attractions, as those do who live in it; and if they were here to speak for themselves, they might well decline to have me represent them. But I can see some of the fascinating features which Romanism offers to its disciples, and can understand, in a measure at least—as it has been part of my business to understand—the appeal which it makes to educated Protestants. And from among its attractive forces, selecting them for their prominence and as easy to be exhibited, I will specify eight.

1. The prime secret of its attractiveness for such minds is, I think, that it claims to offer them in the Roman Church a present, living, authoritative Teacher; which has the mind of God immanent in it; which is the witness and the interpreter of Revelation, and is itself the living medium of such Revelation; which has thus authority to decide on all questions of religious doctrine and duty, and whose decisions, when announced, are infallibly correct, and unspeakably important. This is its first claim; imperative in tone, stupendous in substance, unique in its kind, and very effective.

According to it, as you are aware, the bishops in communion with the See of Peter are the *Ecclesia docens*; the divinely con-

stituted, perpetual, inerrant corporation, in which Christ, by the Holy Ghost, is always present; which is filled, in its totality, with his inspiration, and which thus utters, in its decrees, his voice to the world. It does not merely articulate the general Christian consciousness of truth or of duty; it speaks Christ's mind, as the apostles did in their day, with a superior fitness to modern needs, and with an equivalent, an identical authority.

Debate is, therefore, always in order till the Church has spoken. But after that, doubt is a deadly sin. For it is not a mere perilous dissent from the majority. It is, in its essence, infidelity to Christ. And, on the other hand, the belief of the faithful in a dogma properly formulated and declared needs no argument, allows no hesitation, and asks for no support of reason. It is immediate and final; since it rests solidly on the utterance of the Church, which is to it the testimony of God.

This may seem to us immensely absurd, looked at in the light of history. It may seem prodigiously to transcend all the prerogatives promised by the Lord to the Church to which his truth was given. We may hold ourselves able to count the rings by which the successive increments of influence gathering to that Church hardened at last into the tough and oaken fibre of this unyielding and gigantic claim. It may seem to us to put dishonor on the Bible. And we may feel that it reproduces, with strange exactness, with an almost fearful fidelity, the prediction of Paul concerning that Son of Perdition of whom he forewarned the Thessalonian disciples, "that he, as God, sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." But the claim thus outlined has certainly a subtle and grand attraction for many minds. They do not feel limited, harassed, or forcibly overborne by this Divine authority in the Church. On the contrary, they feel invigorated and elevated by it, because holding themselves assured of the truth, by the very voice of God, speaking now as at the beginning, only speaking now, in tenderness to them, not through trumpet or tempest, in articulate thunders or earthquake throes, but through the consenting votes and voices of consecrated men.

It seems to them the grand privilege of their minds to have such a Church; the contemporary of the apostles; full now, as at Pentecost, of the Holy Ghost; a majestic, abiding, undecivable power, the very body of Christ, through which the present benignant Lord, always in the world, declares with perfect clearness and certainty what is to be believed and what to be done. All their expectations of progress and success in the attainment of divine knowledge rest on this; and their minds are profoundly animated by it. A present revelation, not one in the past

—a revelation through men, not through a book—is that which, according to their conception, now brings to them the thoughts of the Eternal.

Especially in times like ours, when religious doubt is passionate and ubiquitous, when a whirling and vehement skepticism darkens and hurtles in all the air, they greet with peculiar desire and welcome such a basis of certainty, such a guaranty of the truth, such a centre of enlightening and unifying authority. Amidst the many divisions of Christendom they long for this the more. And the Bible, interpreted by each for himself, seems in no degree to meet their want; while neither of the most cultured Protestant churches offers it satisfaction.

Most of all, if they have themselves been assailed by the skeptical spirit, and have wavered and wandered in restless inquiry on the great themes of the soul's well-being, they feel attracted to such a Church, claiming such a prerogative, and offering such relief and assurance; as Döllinger says of Christina of Sweden, that she "took refuge in the ship of ecclesiastical authority from the ocean of philosophical doubt."

And every mind must admit, I think, that there is a certain inspiring grandeur, august yet winning, in such a conception of God's enduring and holy Church; that however far the ambitious corporation whose heart is Jesuitism, and whose head is the Pope, may fail of realizing it, the ideal itself is lofty and seductive; and that our timid and limited human nature, surrounded by so many puzzles, and faced by such tremendous problems, may well at times admit the wish that such a conception had been permitted of God to be realized, and had not been left, as we assuredly hold it to have been, a delusive dream.

This is the first of the attractions of Romanism, to an educated mind. Another is—

2. That it claims to offer to such a mind a body of doctrine, mysterious, no doubt, in some of its parts, but on the whole solid, consistent, consecutive, complete; containing what they accept as a sufficient and satisfying answer to the questions of the soul, the antithesis to infidelity in all its forms, and the consummation of what is true in other systems. It boasts that in this not only the Scripture is fulfilled, but philosophy is illumined, man's history is interpreted, God's ways to man are clearly vindicated; and the appeal which it makes, through this doctrinal scheme, is of immense persuasive force.

The scheme, of course, starts, as every organized theology must, with the doctrine of Original Sin.

Socinianism affirms that man's nature and spirit are right at birth; that they involve, at any rate, no innate and governing propensities to sin, and only need education, with favorable circumstances, to develop all

forms of goodness and virtue. So it holds Jesus a created teacher, the Holy Ghost an impersonal influence, and regeneration a monkish myth.

The Evangelical doctrine affirms that man, as originally created, was like God in nature, and like him also in moral perfection; having the true knowledge of him, and standing in intimate communion with him through the sympathy of supreme and holy love; that no one of his constitutional powers was lost in the fall, though their activity was perverted, and their development hindered; but that the change which then took place was in the essential temper of his heart—selfish idolatry and sinful passion supplanting the Divine love which had preceded, and the inmost dispositions and tendencies of the soul being thereafter averted from God, and directed to selfish pleasure and gain.

The change now needed, therefore, is in this dominant spirit of the heart; to alter the dispositions, to fix the supreme affection upon God, and to restore the spiritual discernment which was possessed, but has been lost. And this is effected by the Divine Spirit, through the truth as his instrument, and especially through the revelation of God's love, as declared, with transcendent fullness and tenderness, in his Son. When this is accomplished, no direct addition is implied to the inherent properties of the soul, but a change is realized in its temper, tastes, and spiritual activities, in its relations to God, and its personal destiny; a change so radical, vital, complete, and so enduring in consequences, as to constitute a true regeneration. Conversion, to the loving obedience of Christ, is its sign and fruit. The beauty of holiness flows from it into life. It is completed in sanctification. And, on the ground of Christ's atonement, he who has not yet reached that sanctity, but in whom its principle has been implanted, is reconciled to God, and is treated as if he had been righteous; is, in other words, justified.

Preaching the Gospel is therefore here the means of regeneration. To lead men to affectionate faith in God, as made manifest in his Son, is the office of the ministry. He who has most of this faith in his heart, other things being equal, is best adapted to excite it in others. The Church and its sacraments are the instruments of God for propagating in the world the truth concerning him, as revealed in his Word, and for maintaining in renovated men the faith and love which by his Spirit have been inspired. His wisdom and grace are illustriously exhibited in this plan of redemption; the angels take new conceptions of him from it; and man is brought back to a holy love which commemorates Paradise, and which prophesies heaven; which, being made complete and immortal, must make a heaven, though every gate of pearl should vanish.

This is the Evangelical doctrine. The Romanist system differs from it in essential particulars. It also holds that man is fallen, and inwardly depraved, but in this distinct sense:—By the image of God, in which he was created, it understands his rational and voluntary nature alone, by no exercise of which could he attain true inward righteousness, the knowledge of God, or the beatific vision. This nature being left to itself, the flesh must fight against the spirit, concupiscence gain the mastery, disorder and corruption follow. To prevent this result were therefore superadded in Adam, by the grace of God, the supernatural gifts of Divine knowledge and righteousness, through which the spirit, re-enforced from its Maker, was enabled to rule and restrain the flesh “as with a golden curb,” and to rise to communion with the Almighty.

It was these Divine supernatural gifts which Adam forfeited in the fall, sacrificing them for his posterity as well as for himself, so that all men now are born without them; are born in the state in which Adam was before he possessed them. And through this loss comes again the victory of concupiscence, the flesh everywhere conquering and debasing the undefended spirit. There is, therefore, nothing to be effectually done for the soul of man, for its holiness and its peace, until these gifts have been restored to it. Without them, whatever teaching it may have, and whatever high influence through that teaching, it is naturally incapable of aspiring to share the wisdom, the holiness, and the blessedness of God, as the flower is of flight, or the bird of solving a question in morals; and, without them, its course is continually downward, toward darker depths of ignorance and of sin.

It is to supply *this* need of men, then, that the incarnation of God in Jesus is divinely ordained and divinely accomplished; to make up to the soul, which has suffered a loss so essential and extreme, for this tremendous transmitted deprivation. By that incarnation the supernatural gift which Adam forfeited is introduced anew into the world; and it thenceforth is distributed, by the Holy Ghost, through the priesthood of the Church, and on its sacraments. It is properly given at the beginning of life, before activity has commenced, at the outset of consciousness.

It is communicated in Baptism; in which is effected an instant, essential, complete regeneration—the infusion of a supernatural life, the removal of all corruption of sin, the immediate and full introduction of the soul into the spiritual household of God. All the saving benefits of Christ's redemption are thus and there conveyed to the soul, as it enters upon life, and begins the career which can never close.

The grace thus imparted is afterward confirmed in Confirmation.

It is nourished and renewed in the sacrament of the Eucharist.

It is restored, if lost, in the sacrament of Penance.

It is replenished and re-enforced in the sacrament of Marriage, by which human love is exalted and transformed into holy affection.

It is renewed, for those who receive this, in the sacrament of Orders.

It is finally sealed, and divinely completed, in the Extreme Unction; after which the soul, pursued and attended with gifts of grace from birth to death, goes forth to meet the grand assize.

Regeneration and Sanctification are, of course, synonymous with Justification, on this system.

The sacraments are efficacious means of grace; having power to convey grace, by the Divine appointment, as material food has to nourish the body, or cold to congeal, or fire to burn.

Transubstantiation is a necessity to the system, the means of realizing continually on earth the gift which came with Incarnation.

The succession of the priesthood is an inevitable part of it; as much so as is the succession of generations to a continued human history. The lines of transmission *must* be uninterrupted; but personal purity in the priest is nowise essential to the virtue of his sacraments.

True spiritual life is a thing impossible outside the Church, and miracles are still to be expected within it. For it is the supernatural Saviour, constantly present in the supernatural Church, who gives authority to every priest, and gives its efficacy to every sacrament; and, if he shall will it, the lame may now leap, the canvas become divinely luminous, the solid marble tremble into speech.

The visible Church is the permanent Divine kingdom in the world, whose numerical limits are exactly defined; and the state of each soul after death is absolutely determined by the relation it has held to that Church and its sacraments.

This is, in brief, the substance of the doctrine. Of course it seems to us in sharp contrast with the Sermon on the Mount; with the teachings and the letters of Paul and his associates; with the very frame and aim of the Gospel; with consciousness itself, and the self-revealing facts of Christian experience. The vices which have risen, and rankly flourished, in the Roman communion—its own historians being the witnesses—are testimony against it. The spiritual attainments of persons and of peoples under Protestant influences become inexplicable, if it be true; they explicitly contradict it.

The answer is immediate, and is to us overwhelming. But the system is logical, consistent, very commanding, and to many

thoughtful and questioning minds very attractive.

Whatever there is of mystery, height, inspiring power, in our doctrine of the Incarnation or of the Trinity, is here as well; whatever of solemn motive and warning in the doctrine of the Fall, and of Human Depravity, and of the Judgment for which we wait. And the advocates of this system hold it complete, while ours is partial; theirs finished, and ours fragmentary.

They do not in the least regard this system as tending to subvert a sound morality, sincere and spiritual piety, belief in Christ as the author of grace and justification, but as simply essential to all these. And while they recognize Evangelical Protestantism as containing still some elements of the truth, they look upon these as scattered timbers, not built into a house, and not sufficient to make one; as plates of iron, worthless separately, and not capable of being framed together, except upon the Roman plan, into the vast and symmetrical fabric which is to bear up, over whelming waves, the heart and hope and faith of the world.

By its claim of authority, and by this articulated body of doctrine, Romanism has a continual attractiveness for many fine minds.

3. There is, too, a vast and subtle power in the representations which it presents of the invisible and spiritual world, and the intimate relations which it declares as always subsisting between that world and this.

The human spirit, conscious of affections, and haunted by premonitions, that overpass death, is always reaching out, with eager desire or with forecasting fear, after knowledge of the world which lies beyond its sense or science; a knowledge more exact and complete than God in his wisdom has seen fit to bestow. So necromancy is never dead; and so Spiritism comes, in our own time, to tip its tables and rap its floors, in a juggling offer to disclose the Unseen. Its incitement is in the hunger of the soul for some apprehension of the realms whose bounds, of beauty or fire, it has not reached.

And now Protestantism, which limits itself to what has been clearly expressed in the Bible, and which deals timidly even with that, seems vague, undefined, and essentially unsatisfying, in its treatment of all that mystic domain which lies before us, in comparison with the exact descriptions which Romanism presents.

This affirms that those who die after baptism—really regenerate, and having committed no unforgiven and mortal sin, yet confessedly imperfect in action and in virtue—are to undergo, in the future state, certain temporal pains, by which they are to be purified, and satisfaction to be rendered to the Divine Justice; that these pains may be abridged by the offering of prayers, pen-

ances, and alms, and of the unbloody sacrifice, on the part of those who tarry behind; and that the limiting or remitting of the pains is within the prerogative of the authorities of the Church.

So friends who linger, with aching hearts, on this side of the grave, have power still to bless their dead. Across the far untrodden spaces they can send reliefs, and tidings of joy, to those who have vanished from their sight. And, in return, they may receive real aids and blessings from the dead. Those now sainted and beatified can intercede with God for us, and will do this if we invoke them. They are living, conscious, in the presence of God, in enjoyment of the beatific vision, yet informed of what we need and desire—perhaps by the mind of God himself—and are fraternally sympathetic with us. We may pay them homage: not the *Latreia*, due to God only, or the *Uperdouleia*, due to the Virgin Mother, but the *Douleia*, proper to saints. And we may implore with joyful freedom their ready assistance as intercessors for us with the Almighty.

Angels, too, in their power and splendor, and their relative sovereignty over nature and life, are still the guardian spirits of men—of the least and humblest, to whom has come God's gift through Christ.

Especially the Virgin Mother of Christ may be asked to aid us, with her tender sympathy, and her unbounded power with her Son. The growth of reverence for her in the Roman Church shows how dear and alluring the thought of her is to the minds of mankind. The vision of her seems to flash a certain tender light over realms that were otherwise so high as to be dreadful. First, her perpetual virginity is declared. Then, she is formally styled and proclaimed the Mother of God. Then temples are built, and prayers are arranged to be offered to her, as Queen of Heaven. Then her immaculate conception, without stain of original sin, is declared to be a dogma of faith. Now, she is undoubtedly more frequently implored in the Roman Communion than God or Christ.

Women and children are especially attracted—but not they only, the strongest and most philosophic are attracted—by the thought of a Woman, at once maiden and mother, the spotless and illustrious head of her sex, so near the eternal throne of the universe, while full of gentlest memories and love.

And so the whole mysterious realm beyond the grave—from which no traveler returns to us, the gloom and glory of whose shadows and lights have been reflected on thoughtful minds from the outset of history, but the vision of which only death reveals—seems brought nearer the earth, and made palpable by Romanism; its inhabitants to be declared; their relations to us

to be revealed as mutual and sympathetic; our offices for them and theirs for us to be shown surviving the dread separation, and still to be accomplished across the vast and dim abysses. And however we may dismiss the whole, as unauthorized by the Lord and unwarranted by Scripture, the simple creation of man's imagination, as wholly ideal as a fancy concerning the civil constitution of republics in Sirius, we must not forget that there is prodigious attraction in it for many longing and sensitive souls. It seems to them too beautiful in itself, and too congruous with their wishes, not to be true.

4. Then, further, Romanism claims to offer a greater security of salvation than other systems afford; and to those accustomed critically and conscientiously to examine their inward processes of feeling, their successive vanishing states of mind, and who thus come to suspect the reality of their own virtue, this is immediately and immensely attractive.

For feeling seems to fly, as we touch it with our analysis, almost as life flits and fleets beneath the destructive dissecting edge. Spiritual states inevitably disappear when we look away from that which inspires them, and search, with an introverted scrutiny, after themselves. Many a person of a sincere piety questions, therefore, if he may not have been deceiving himself as to the realness of his faith and repentance; if what seemed contrition may not have been an unloving fear of the consequences of sin; if what had been taken for Christian faith may not have been an assent of the understanding, with no affectionate devoutness of spirit to make it vital.

He questions this all the more as his reverence for God becomes more supreme, and his personal humility becomes more complete. He questions it most of all when he fronts, face to face, the tremendous facts of Death, Judgment, and the long Hereafter. Because a mistake must have such consequences, he is tremulously ready to suspect its existence. The fact that he suspects it seems to furnish fresh evidence that he has made it; and the passage is no long one from such a doubt to remorseful despondency.

Now, in such a mood of apprehensive self-questioning, Romanism appeals to him with a prodigious force of invitation. For, whatever the fact may prove to be when its offers are analyzed, it seems to propose certain definite and practicable conditions of salvation, which appear as unmistakable as the ladder against a burning house, or the lifeboat at sea.

Baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, confession, penance, obedience to the Church, absolution by the priest, in whom authority to pronounce it has been vested by God, and whose declaration is ratified in heaven, the

final anointing, and then, if any thing still remain of unfulfilled obligation, a full and eternal satisfaction to God by temporary pains beyond this life—this is the plan which it proposes, and on which it offers the assurance of heaven.

It will certainly turn out that all this presupposes certain spiritual states in him who adopts it, without which it becomes confessedly ineffectual, and that the same doubts which perplexed him before may, therefore, here as easily arise; and it also will appear that an intention of the priest is needful to the efficacy of every sacrament, of which intention the man who receives this can never have certain and infallible proof; while it seems to us as plain as the stars that the whole scheme is wanting in Scriptural authority; that it is not implied in the words of the Master, nor in any teaching of his apostles; that it tends to give men a false security, and to substitute an exact ecclesiastical obedience for the faith and love which alone can spiritually unite men to God. But, after all, it is very alluring, especially, as I said, to a mind introspective, self-distrustful, conscious of sin, and feeling the doom of immortality upon it.

When such a one draws near the point of final passage to realms unchanging and eternal; when he thinks of the Eye which searches every thought and wish, and traces the secret windings of desire; when he feels on his prophetic soul the heat and splendor of the great White Throne—to hear God's voice, through human lips, giving him quittance and final absolution, as Jesus to the loving woman, it is a thing which any one might desire if he could persuade himself that God had committed an authority so awful, an office so sovereign, to human hands!

5. And still further, Romanism seems to many to offer them a higher sanctity of spirit and life than Protestantism does; a sanctity, indeed, which is wholly peculiar to it, and for which Protestantism, under whatever name or form, presents no equivalent. So it attracts some whom it is a grief to us to lose.

They want a life set apart from earthly care and labor, from desire and pleasure, from all the fascinations and entanglements of the world; a life devoted to religious meditation, and to works of constant beneficence and piety; a life in sympathy with that of ancient martyrs and confessors, of Agnes and Perpetua, of Basil and Benedict, and Francis of Assisi, and of princes who left their crowns for Christ; a life that is hid with Christ in God.

They long for this. Because the spiritual nature in them is tender and deep, and has been moved by a mighty impulse, it yearns with inexpressible desire for fellowship with the Lord, and for the utmost possible attain-

ment in the Divine virtue. This is, as it ought to be, the supreme and inspiring passion of their souls, for which they are ready to sacrifice all.

All the more they desire it as life around them is hurried and hot, full of ambition, lust, and greed. Amidst the rush and glare of pleasure, amidst the incessant roar of trade, this desire, in finer minds, becomes only the more intense and imperative. It has the energy of a recoil from that which offends, as well as the strength of a personal aspiration. It operates at length like a law of their being; no more to be resisted than that which quickens the mother's love, or makes self-accusation follow a conscious and deliberate sin. "My soul be with the saints," they say. The inmost, incessant thirst of their hearts is for a celestial life on earth.

And Romanism seems to offer them satisfaction. The sacraments are declared to communicate, and continually afterward to renew in the heart, this inner sanctity. They invest the whole progress of life on earth, and meet and sanctify all its changes.

Manuals of devotion, wonderfully rich, tender, and varied, are offered to the disciple, to assist him to gain, and then to maintain, the white chastity and the radiant charity of this divine life.

The confessional offers its ear, never shut, into which the story of every impulse of doubt or passion may be instantly breathed, and behind which is a mind declared to be instructed of God to clear the doubt and quench the passion.

Calvaries are constructed in Roman Catholic countries, with successive stations representing the stages of the way to the cross, at each of which men may bow and pray, as with tender love and shuddering awe they climb toward the crucifix. And convents and monasteries open to men and women alike their hospitable doors, outside which all cares and possessions may be left, where homes for life are furnished to the devout, and within which the world's clamor and glitter are unheard and unseen.

To the active and energetic, for whom rest would be weariness, the most arduous and dangerous missions are assigned; to pierce the forest and the jungle, and spend their years among savage tribes; to face the biting arctic cold, and the blazing fierceness of tropic heat; to front the pestilence, shadowing at once the city and the sea with its dark wings.

Now I need not tell you how fascinating is all this—to women of fine and sensitive natures, to whom the common life of society seems demoralized drudgery; to men of the heroic mould, to whom a supreme self-sacrifice is attractive, and who count a life-long service to God the only royal good on earth. Protestantism seems to them, in comparison

with this, gross, secular, essentially earthly, in its spirit and aims. When it bids them consecrate their business to God, and doing it in his fear, to do it all to his glory, it seems to them illicitly trying to unite God and Mammon. When it insists on the household life as the purest and noblest for both men and women, it seems to them Epicurean in spirit, hazarding the attempt to find a flowery path to the paradise which can only be reached over thorny roughnesses, and entered through sorest wrestle and pain.

Protestant missions are to them too luxurious; our labors for the poor appear dainty and haughty. And when an order of Protestant devotees is anywhere established, they feel instinctively that that is play, while they are in earnest; that only an absolute self-abnegation, guarded by irreversible vows, can match the height of their desire. So they welcome the severer tasks, the stricter limitations, the more austere and exacting discipline which Romanism offers, and seek in its services the life of God.

They may be disappointed, with a blasting surprise that shall blacken and wreck their whole subsequent life.

One of the most impressive pictures which the recent traveler sees in Europe is by the fertile French Doré, exhibited last year in London, representing a young monk, who has just learned how greedy and gross his associates are, and on whose sad and sensitive face, as his missal drops in his languid hands, is breaking forth the passionate sense of disappointment, detestation, of inner repugnance, and an utter despair. The power of the picture is in its reflection of an experience not unfamiliar.

Blanco White, who knew intimately the convents of Spain, and whose veracity has never been questioned, speaks of those convents in one of his letters as "those European jungles, where lurks every thing that is hideous and venomous." And the key to his final entire skepticism, who began public life as a devout priest, is found by those who know most of his career in that fierce sentence.

But whatever the final experience may be, the offer which Romanism makes to these men is great and shining; and it need excite no wonder in us that they should find it grandly attractive.

6. Then, with all these forces of attraction, the Roman Catholic Church is a vast, venerable, historic organization, of unequalled age, of immense extent, whose history has, in some of its aspects, been a grand one; whose history appears to those whom it attracts the one sublimest thing on earth—inexplicable, except upon the hypothesis of its Divine origin.

It is to them the Church of the Apostles; which saw the splendor of the Ascension, which heard Peter and John at Jerusalem,

Paul afterward at Corinth and at Rome, and which directly conveys to us the *deposited* of faith received from them.

It is to them the Church of the Catacombs; where the new Christian kingdom was working underground, in garments of sackcloth, along galleries of rock, to overthrow and replace the armed empire above.

It is the Church of the Fathers, and the canonized Doctors, to whose learning and eloquence, and spiritual insight, the world is debtor; of Clement and Polycarp, of Justin Martyr and Hippolytus, of Ambrose, Athanasius, and him of the flaming Numidian heart.

It is the Church of the great Councils; before which were lowered imperial standards, to whose decisions faction bowed, and whose creeds and decrees have governed and assimilated the mind of Christendom.

It is the Church of the Middle Ages; of Anselm, Bernard, and Peter the Hermit; the Church which civilized barbarians, liberated slaves, organized crusades, built cathedrals, established libraries, founded universities; which preserved learning, laws, and arts, amidst the shock of terrific forces, in what an ancient Gallican sacramentary hardly exaggerated when it called it "the crash of a falling world;" the Church which taught the emerging peoples subjection to authority, while it set sharp bounds to the rapacity of barons, and admonished and ruled the haughtiest kings; the Church which has since sent forth its heroic and conquering teachers to the ends of the earth, "*Ad maiorem Dei gloriam.*"

And, ancient as it is, this powerful Church appears to them to-day the only power which nothing in fact centrally disturbs; the only one which can defy infidelity, rule the licentious wills of men, subdue and inspire the daring and refractory human intellect, ennoble and rectify human society; the only one which science can not shake, nor revolution dethrone, nor the fiercest antagonism of secular interests override and destroy.

The supremacy of the spiritual order in the world appears to them guaranteed by it, and by it alone. Secure itself, from all assault, it judges the world.

To us, who look on the same long records from a wholly different point of view, it seems as certain as any thing in experience that much of this is unhistorical, is purely fanciful; that it has been the Gospel, as a spiritual force, working apart from and often directly against the Hierarchy, which has done the best part of this; that whosoever now preaches that Gospel, with fervent faith, is the true successor of all the saints; and that the history of the Roman corporation, which only came to its full development under Leo and the Gregories, has been crowded with bigotry, pride, persecution; with prelatical tyranny, priestly license, and

popular degradation; with carnivals of folly, and carnivals of crime; has been blackened with the names of inquisitors like Torquemada; has been stained, so that hyssop can not purge it, by prelates and pontiffs like the Borgias and the Medicis.

This is our conception of it. But to those minds whose different attitude toward it I am trying to present, the opposite aspect is the one which it offers; and often they are profoundly impressed by it. They seem to themselves ennobled by partaking in a history which looks so sacred and august. They feel themselves confederate with the men, God's champions in the world, whose majestic achievements amaze and delight them. They are strengthened for swifter and grander work by all the heroic wisdom and devotion to which the Church appears to them heir. A baptism of power falls on them from the past, which is animating and precious beyond all words. And this is an appeal which we must not overlook, if we would master the secret of their zeal.

7. Still further, too, we must not forget that Romanism powerfully appeals to these men by its cordial relations with all the fine arts; with music, painting, sculpture, architecture; with whatever impresses and most delights the senses and the taste.

Its cathedrals are the wonders of the world: mountains of rock-work set to music.

Its elaborate, opulent, mighty masses make the common hymn-tunes of Protestantism sound almost like the twitter of sparrows, amidst the alternate triumph and wail of commingling winds.

Its ritual is splendid, scenic, impressive, to the ultimate degree; and all is exquisitely pervaded and modulated by the doctrine which underlies it, every gesture, every posture, of the officiating priest, and every vestment which he wears, being full of significance.

Its liturgical forms have not merely been arranged by studious men, with apt and practiced gifts for the office. They have some of them been born of those immense crises in personal or in public experience when intensity of feeling, surpassing all poetic impulse, infused spiritual fire into the sentences. Not only reminiscences are in them, therefore, of perils passed and victories achieved; their present utterance is that of the faith which soared upward from the flame, or looked from the damp darkness of dungeons and beheld above the heavens opened. And architecture can not be too majestic to echo such voices. The tone-speech of music, in its most tender or jubilant strains, becomes their meek and glad handmaid.

Nothing, therefore, is too ornate or magnificent to be incorporated in the superb ceremonial of this immense organism. It

marches, as it fights, an army with banners. It would copy, if it could, the very ceremonial of the Temple above. The king's daughter is all glorious within, and her raiment must be of wrought gold.

To one who wants his whole æsthetic nature gratified and educated in his worship, while it shall be also and always subordinated to spiritual attainment—who accepts this nature as from God, and feels its thrilling and sweet impulses demanding a lawful and large domain—there is here a constant and vast attraction. Other, more strictly intellectual services, appear to him barren and frigid in comparison. He seems to himself to be honoring God with a worthier worship, while gaining for himself a peculiar delight, by making the sanctuary a poem in stone, and then bringing into it the purple and the gold, the veils of silk, and fragrant incense, by hanging it with pictures, and paneling its walls with significant marbles. It is not the understanding alone, or the moral nature, which that worship is designed to enlist. The imagination is to be reached by it, and profoundly stimulated. The most secret sources of feeling are to be searched; the most delicate and retiring sympathies. The whole soul is to be suffused with its subtle influence, as the atmosphere of the church is struck through with golden or crimson lights, till holy memories arise within one; till he is wrapped in sweet ecstacy of reveries; till he is conscious of undefined and transporting expectations, and almost waits to hear around, upon the charmed and perfumed air, the rustle of angelic plumes.

The apostles worshiped well and truly, not at all in this way. The Saviour made no suggestion of this to the woman of Samaria, when he taught her how to offer her devotions. Our fathers found delight in praise, and were heard in their prayer, though offering it in rudest forms, under bleakest skies, because incense stifled them, and the gorgeous vestments seemed to them dipped in the blood of the saints. We do not maintain the passion of their reaction; but we, too, are afraid of that sensuous pleasure which may be easily confounded with worship, while wholly dissimilar; which may leave the soul intoxicated with joy, while utterly wanting in the devout love which links to God, and in the faith which conquers death.

But the convert to Romanism delights himself in this service; so rich and tender, so various and so ancient, with a passionate fondness; while the occasional attempts of ambitious High-churchmen to emulate that which the blending genius of many centuries and lands has produced are to him simply ludicrous; like building another equal St. Peter's of scantling and boards, or reproducing Warwick Castle in cake and sugar.

8. And, finally, let us not forget that Romanism offers to these men what they accept as the Church of the Future; through which, continuing to the end of time, and only growing mightier with age, the perfect society shall be realized on earth. We have not reached the hiding of its power till we recognize this.

It presents itself as ancient, but as still in the fullness of unworn strength; as having the compactness, the hardihood, the confidence, which come with a long and vast experience, but as combining with this the ardor of its most fervent and hopeful youth.

It seems conservative, beyond all other human societies; since its government is, and must always continue, in the hands of a trained and practiced class, shrewd, vigilant, closely combined, everywhere represented. It seems communistic, beyond the dream of any Socialist; since all baptized persons are made equally its members, and if continuing subject to the Church are one, eternally, in Christ Jesus.

It claims to be eminently the Church for the rich; whose utmost treasures can not rival its revenues, whose titles and pedigrees it immensely surpasses, and whose palaces dwindle before its cathedrals.

It claims, more emphatically, to be the Church for the poor; for whom its buildings and many services are always open, on whose behalf it builds great hospitals, to whom it preaches in historic cathedrals, like Notre Dame in Paris or the Duomo at Milan, as well as in the humblest chapels, and before whom it displays the most exquisite splendors of its magnificent ritual.

Compare its churches with ours, open only on Sunday, and then occupied chiefly by the cultured and the prosperous, and ours look partial, exclusive, in the contrast; careless of those for whom the Lord died, and in whom he now presents himself to us.

It is limited to no nation, this ever-expanding, exploring Church; but is equally at home on every coast, and under every form of government. It grasps the most barbarous, while it trains the most civilized. It has an office for every power, and has a lure for every desire. Its plans extend to all the lands, and anticipate in their reach the coming generations. And that perennial energy of it which is shown on the one hand in its doctrinal progress from dogma to dogma, till now it has concentrated such transcendent authority in the person of the Pope, on the other hand is shown in the missionary work which, radiating from Rome, is ever proceeding, with uncounted expenditure of money and of life, with unwearied patience, and an unsurpassed skill, on every shore where life is found.

If any institution seems likely to endure, then, by reason of its inherent strength, and in the absence of Divine interventions, this

is the one. To those who see in it the kingdom of God, made visible in the world, and filled with his eternal force, nothing else which is future seems as certain as this. It saw the downfall of the empire of Rome. Unchanged itself, it has watched the change, and seen the end, of kingdoms and thrones from that day to this. They expect it to see the end of those which now look stately and strong on earth, and to have the perpetuity which can belong to nothing else upon this whirling, inconstant planet.

It is to them still in the beginning of its years. They anticipate the time when it shall have reconquered Germany and England, shall have reconciled to itself the severed and feebler Eastern Churches, shall have set the cross above the crescent, shall have baptized Buddhist and Brahmin in its faith, shall have come to the full inheritance of the earth. And then they expect the perfect society, through the wisdom, justice, and spiritual sanctity, which it will everywhere propagate and maintain.

They glory in being permitted to reach forward, through this expanding, enduring organization, to mould the distant future of the world; not limiting themselves to a fugitive influence, which shall have passed when they are buried, but projecting their influence directly and sensibly into the future, and with the mightiest instrument of time working for the good of the latest generations.

In the ultimate triumph of this Church of their devotion they expect the Millennium; and in the peaceful glories of that they look, each one, to have some share. It is a great anticipation. We must not wonder if it grapples their hearts as with hooks of steel.

So it is, then, Fathers and Brethren, as I conceive it, and so far as the time allows me to state it, that Romanism appeals to educated Protestants; as offering them an authoritative teacher, always present, in which it claims that the mind of God resides and is revealed; as presenting what it affirms to be a solid, consistent, and satisfying theology; as claiming to bring the spiritual world more clearly and closely to their minds, and to show their relations to it more intimate; as professing to give them a security of salvation unattainable elsewhere; as offering them what it declares the only true sanctity of spirit and life; as showing a long and venerable history; as welcoming and cherishing all the fine arts, and making these its constant helpers; as promising to rebuild and purify society, and at last to possess and regenerate the earth.

To those who are attracted by it, it seems to have all which other systems possess or claim, and to add vital elements which others lack, supplying their imperfections, sur-

passing their power, and meeting wants which they can neither interpret nor answer.

It influences men by its immense mass, without their conscious discrimination of its separate attractions. Its bulk is so gigantic, its energy so incessant, that it seems to them to verify its claims without other argument, and to make a private judgment against it the most rash and reckless of spiritual acts. So it draws them to it with a moral momentum which increases as they approach; with a force almost like that of the physical suction of a current or a whirlpool. Once started on their course to it, opposing argument becomes nearly powerless. The pull of this immense and consummate system is so strenuous and enveloping that theological, philosophical, historical objections are evaded or overleaped by the yielding mind, as are rocks in a rapid by rushing timbers.

Where it has once become firmly established it impregnates every thing with its mysterious and penetrant influence. It becomes a pervading spiritual presence; which has its voices not only in the pulpit or in books of devotion, but in homes, and schools, and all places of concourse; which touches life at every point where that is sensitive and responsive; which is associated with ancestral memories and renown, and more vitally associated with the hopes of the future. It gives stability to rank, yet makes the humblest at home amidst its more than royal pageants. It invites the scholar to a happy seclusion, yet smites the most laborious life with a gleam from the supernatural. It paints the story of Christ on windows, and carves it in lordly and delicate marbles, for the eager and wondering eyes of childhood, and for the fading sight of age. It occupies itself with imperial cares, yet connects itself intimately with the deepest aspirations which move the soul, and with its longing love for the dead. It is like displacing the atmosphere to remove it. Rebellion against it seems to dislocate the frame of society itself. Only a tremendous moral reaction, inspired and sustained by forces which are in their nature incompressible, and which have been gathering through successive generations, can break its hold on a nation which once it has firmly grasped.

It is still too recent and too limited with us to have such a general sweep of power. But it is working, with unwearied resolution, to make itself supreme among us. Its very strangeness gives it prominence in our American or English society; as a palm-tree attracts more attention than an oak. It brings forces that have been disciplined for a thousand years to act on our plastic modern life; and converts to it may be expected from many quarters.

Some have held its doctrine before, in the feebler, more fanciful, and more fragmentary

form in which that is avowed by a section, for example, of the Angelican communion, in England and here. Their logical sense must carry them to its conclusions, if logical sense has been able to maintain itself through the enfeebling prettiness of their previous career.

Some, holding the evangelical doctrine of the Divinity of our Lord, and the present operation of the Holy Ghost, find here what seems to them the necessary complement, and the justifying reason, of these transcendent disclosures; the only exact and final antithesis to Socinianism, or even to atheism. Some are drawn to it by the fervor of feeling, the energy of pathetic and admonishing eloquence, which mark the sermons of the Paulists, and of others who, like them, appear from their retreats to stir men's hearts as messengers from God. Some simply and gladly react into it from a restless, sad, and weary skepticism. But all are greatly in earnest when they go. They are true devotees, and they rarely return. They are usually Ultramontanists afterward. There is nothing languid, moderate, tepid; in their conviction or their feeling. They are resolute, enthusiastic, with a fire of zeal which works alike in brain and heart. And they have a tone of assurance in their words, and of certainty of victory. Bellarmine is their favorite theologian. De Maistre is widely popular with them. Hyacinthe and Döllinger are "fallen angels."

They had no trouble with the dogma of Papal Infallibility. It was desired and welcomed by them, as articulating what had been latent for centuries in the unvoiced consciousness of the Church, and as bringing the whole system to its legitimate and prophesied climax. That Pope Honorius had been formally condemned by the Sixth Council, his dogmatic writings burned as heretical, and his name anathematized and stricken from the liturgy, was not even a hindrance to the eagerness of their faith.

They make great sacrifices for their convictions, and do it joyfully. Indeed, the sacrifice becomes to them a fresh motive, an argument for the system which demands it. For, according to the cross shall be the crown, and they who have come out of great tribulation shall find their robes of a more lustrous white. Before the intensity of their aspiration the ties of friendship, the strongest bonds of earthly relationship, if tending to withhold them from the Church of their desire, yield and are severed as flaxen fibres in the flame. For they regard the system which they accept, not only as essential to the future of mankind, to the well-being of persons, to the safety and glory of peoples and states; they regard it as alone Divine in its nature, overwhelming in its authority, whose touch should properly shatter and consume whatever opposes it. Even the

temporary toleration of a different faith is to them an unwelcome necessity. A system of popular education not pervaded by Roman Catholic influences, is ensnaring and dangerous. They have the courage of their convictions; and they use without stint the instruments of Protestantism to further their system and to make it universal.

Even present failure does not dishearten them. That they expect; and they can wait, for the Church lives on. The ages are hers; and to her supreme incorporeal life, which time does not waste nor change impair, the final victory always is sure!

If we are to resist the vast effort of these men, and to make the liberties which our fathers bequeathed to us, and the Gospel in which they surely trusted, supreme in the land, we must at least know more than we have known of the seductive and stimulating forces which operate against us, and which we are to encounter. To treat the cases of those who have gone from us to Rome as merely sporadic—the effect of accidental causes, or of personal eccentricity—one might as well treat thus the power which drives the Gulf Stream northward, or which hurls the monsoons of the Indian Ocean back and forth across the equator.

The one tremendous fact against them is that they can not alter, and can not obliterate, the record of the past. Their system has been abundantly tried; and, fascinating as it looks, its prodigal promises have been proved as unreal as the stately pleasure-dome of Kubla Khan seen by Coleridge in his dream. The scheme which looks so seductive and magnificent, when searched by the passionless logic of events, when tested in the slow and solemn ordeal of succeeding centuries, in Italy, Spain, Mexico, the West Indies, turns out as unreal in what it claims and in what it proposes, as the island of Nowhere in the famous romance of Sir Thomas More.

Good men have lived under it, multitudes of them; saintly women, as pure and devout as ever brightened the earth with their presence; and such live in it now. But their goodness is wholly and constantly paralleled outside their communion, because it has come, not from what is peculiar to that, but from the quickening light of God's Word, and the transforming energy of his Spirit, which we as freely and consciously partake. In that which is peculiar to it—its hierarchy, its ritual, its efficacious sacraments, its indulgences to the sinner, its vast and complex organization, the concentration of all authority in its "Vice-God" at Rome—wherever the system has had its way it has wrought such mischiefs that the pen hesitates to recount them.

It has been powerful to depress peoples,

ineffectual to uplift them. It has, with sure instinct, discouraged and diminished secular enterprise. It has linked itself most naturally with the harshest and most tyrannous civil institutions. It has made religion a matter of rites, and a matter of locality; till the same man became a devotee in the chapel, and a bandit in the field. It has accepted a passionate zeal for the Church in place of the humility, the purity and charity, which Christ demanded; till the fierce Dominic becomes one of its saints; till forged decretals were made for centuries to bulwark its power; till its hottest anathemas have been launched at those who complained of its abuses; till all restraints of humanity or morality have been overleaped in many excesses to which its adherents have been prompted from the altar. Its most devoted and wide-spread order, the Society of Jesus, in spite of its invincible heroism and its unequalled services to the popes, by the monstrous maxims which Pascal exposed, and the practices which expressed them, so kindled against it the indignation of Christendom that Clement XIV. was compelled to suppress it in all Christian states.

The rage of this system against whatever would hinder its march—against its own subjects when they have conscientiously paused in their submission—has had something transcendent in its pitiless malignity. The fierceness of its persecutions has been precisely proportioned to its power. The hand which looks so full of blessing has opened the deep of *oubliettes*, has added tortures to the rack, has framed the frightful Iron Maiden, has set the torch to martyr fires. The breath which should have filled the air with sweeter than Sabæan odors has blighted the bloom of many lives, and floated curses over the nations so frequent and so awful that life itself was withered before them, till their very extravagance made them harmless.

Instead of true wisdom, where this system has prevailed with an unquestioned supremacy, it has fostered and maintained wide popular ignorance. Instead of true sanctity, its fruit has been shown in peasantries debased, aristocracies corrupted, an arrogant and a profligate priesthood. It has honored the vilest who would serve it, and crushed the purest who would not. It sent gifts and applause, and sang its most exulting *Te Deum*, for Philip the Second; while its poisoned bullet killed William of Orange. The medal which it struck in joyful commemoration of the bloody diabolism of St. Bartholomew's is one of its records. Its highest officials have sometimes lived lives which its own annalists have hated to touch. Alexander VI., cruel, crafty, avaricious, licentious, whom it were flattery to call a Tiberius in pontificals—who bribed his way to the highest dignity, who burned Savona-

rola, the traditional portrait of whose favorite mistress, profanely painted as the Mother of God, hangs yet in the Vatican, who probably died by the poisoned wine which he had had prepared for his cardinals, and whose evil renown is scarcely matched by that of Cæsar Borgia his son—stands as one of its infallible popes, holding the keys of heaven for men.

If any system is doomed by its history, this is the one. Protestantism has now so checked it, the advancing moral development of mankind has set such limits to its power, that these are largely facts of the past. The Vatican Court is now free from scandal. The Church at present seeks strength through beneficence, not through control of the secular arm; by its helps to piety, not through appeals to physical fear. But its more spontaneous and self-revealing development has been in this more friendly Past. Therefore the nations whom once it has ruled, when they finally break from it, hate it with an intensity proportioned to the promises it has failed to fulfill, and the bitter degradations it has made them undergo. Atheism itself—that moral suicide—seems better to them than to be again subjected to Rome.

This is the system as realized in history, and there forever adjudged and sentenced. Of course this gives immense advantage to those who now resist its progress. It can not fascinate the nations again till the long experience is forgotten. But such is not at all its appearance as presented to those whom it wins to its fold. And we must look at it, in a measure at least, as those who honor and love it look, if we would understand its power, if we would know how it is that it hopes a second time to conquer the world.

Travelers have often and glowingly described the silver and golden illuminations of St. Peter's, as seen from the Pincian Hill at Rome, on the great Easter festival. Wonderful, ethereal, almost celestial, appears the majestic Basilica, with its dome, when suddenly over all its lines flashes that startling, unearthly radiance.

It has never been noticed, so far as I have observed, that the illumination is wholly confined to that half of the dome which fronts the city. The other remains frowning and stern, while this is glowing through the darkness like a golden temple let down by God from heaven to earth.

We must not look only, as often we do, on the sombre and sterile side of Romanism, if we would comprehend its attraction. We must know, and feel, that there are aspects of it in which, to those who look with admiring eyes on its immense illuminated front, it appears more beautiful and serene than any vision of poets, while as solid and commanding as the very, and only, Temple of God.





The Appeal of Romanism to Educated Protestants.

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By RICHARD S. STORRS, D.D.,
OF BROOKLYN, N. Y.

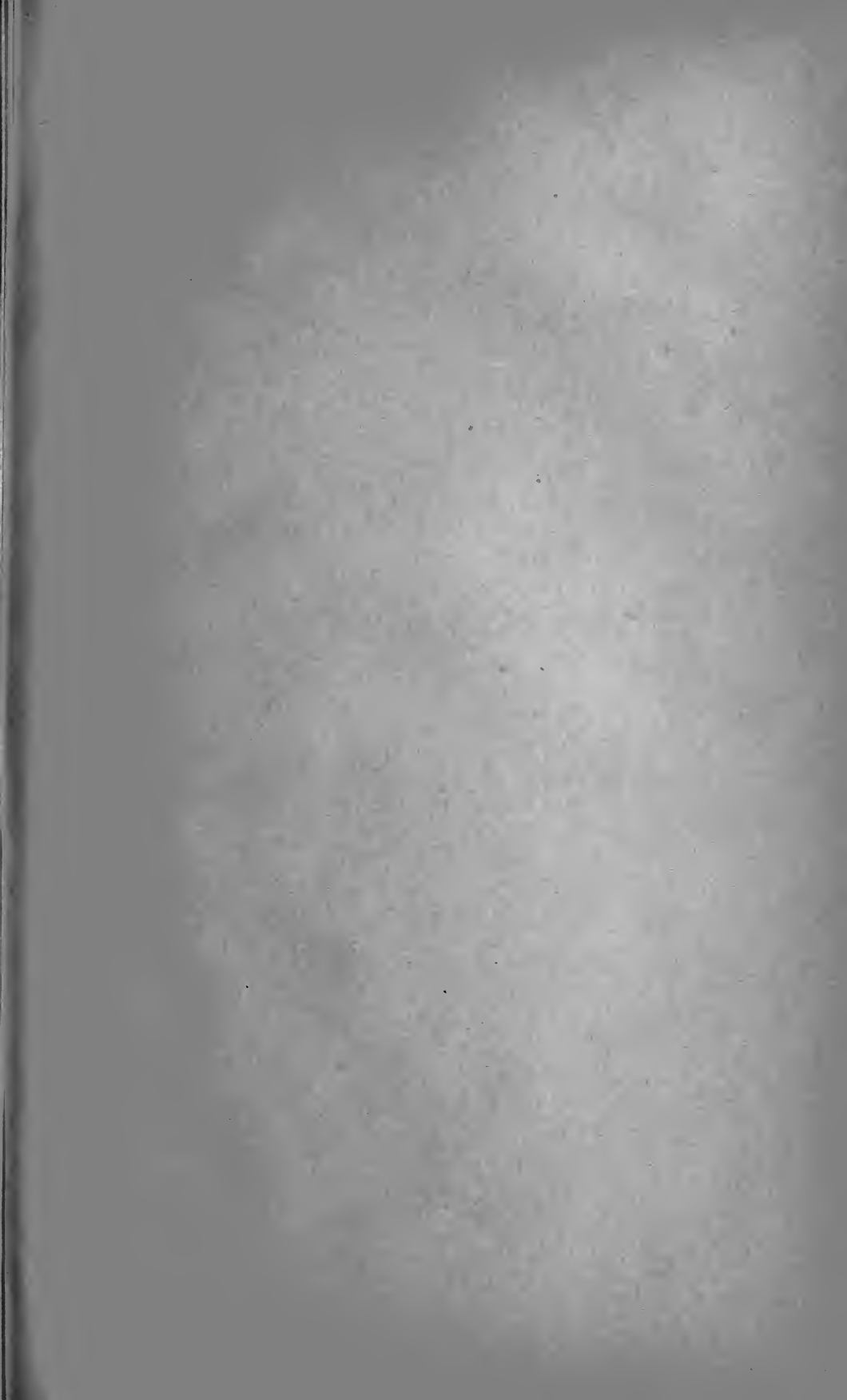
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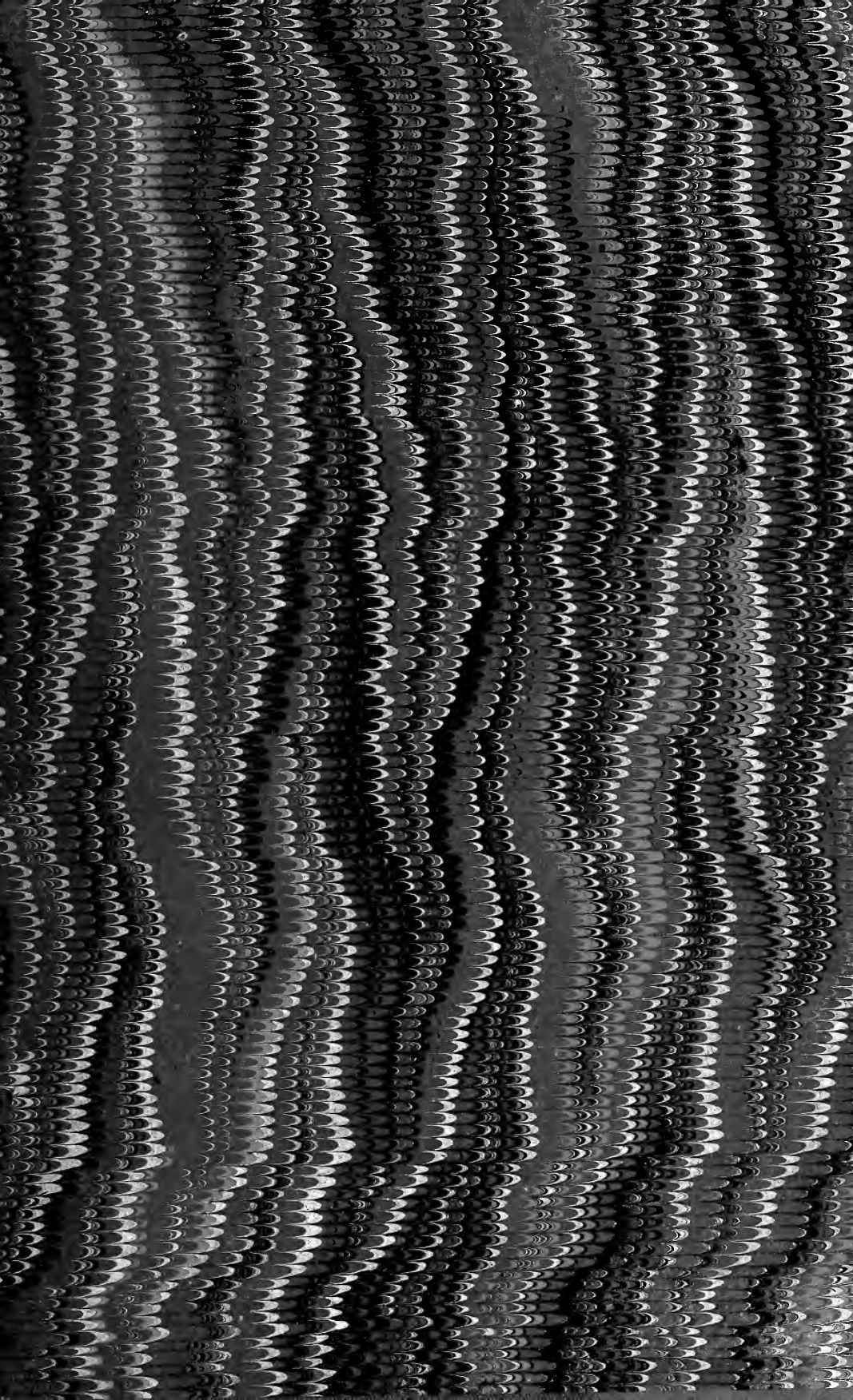


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